

THE SHAMAN



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THE LAST

TRUE ANTIQUARY

(A PORTRAIT OF JOHN MICHELL)

BY ANTHONY ROBERTS

Labourers in vineyards are often inclined to get crushed in the presses or totally inebriated, the latter sometimes leading to the former. They rarely get praise or recognition while they are in the process of labouring. This piece of writing is an attempt to redress that imbalance for a man who has laboured and is labouring in the vineyard of occult/geomantic philosophy for more than twenty years. He has produced some incredibly fine vintages that are steadily maturing in time's hungry casks.

But to many people John Michell is a name couched in myth and legendary yet divorced from any true human recognition.

It must be difficult to concentrate the mind when one has become a "living legend" for too often men who achieve this stature (or more likely have it falsely thrust upon them) begin to believe in their own exaltation and to diminish as truly recognisable human beings. In this case quite the reverse has happened. Now although "JOHN MICHELL" is a revered and remote figure to many occult/earth mysteries afficianadoes, John Frederick Michell the man is a very warm and interesting human being in his own right. His sense of humour is supreme and his humanity rich and eccentric. It is the purpose of this writing to elucidate this a little by filling in the background that has contributed to the overall magical mosaic. It is an attempt to put Michell and his work into perspective.

It is interestingly apt that in his most famous book, "THE VIEW OVER ATLANTIS" (1969), John Michell opened and subsequently elaborated his geomantic argument with substantial material relating to the work of the antiquaries John Aubrey and William Stukeley. These two men flourished in the "golden age" of English antiquarianism, the 17th/18th centuries. Both worked on the cusp, so to speak, spanning the two centuries like giants. Aubrey and Stukeley were part of that curious, peculiarly English breed, the inspired and enthusiastic gentleman amateur. They were civilised, comfortably off, brilliantly enquiring eccentrics with fiercely mystical leanings towards the past. They sought the original "Golden Age" ethos through studies of past cosmologies, filtered through research into the curious cultural mores of their own time. They investigated into Druidism and ancient religions, they were Celtophiles and believers in a once universal philosophy of nature mysticism, ~~xxx~~ under God of course. In fact they were what would now be termed geomantic researchers and theoreticians with pronounced undertones. Such a man is John Michell, a direct descendant (intellectually and culturally) of these alchemists of ideas. And such an age is the late twentieth century as a new era of magically orientated culture dawns.

But there are problems, false dawns, etc. The last two decades have seen a dramatic revival of interest in all aspects of magic and the occult, but in many instances this revival has emphasised the superficial, the bizarre and the mundane. There has been a vast growth industry of books, magazines, articles, films and television

programmes proclaiming a new "Renaissance of Magic" but usually reducing the sacred mysteries to the level of garbled mythology, conjouring tricks, ego-tripping and pseudo-psychology. Charlatans abound. But it is also true that in every country of what is now increasingly termed "the Mystic West" a few men and women have grasped the golden nettle of occult philosophy and begun a genuine revolution in spiritual and historical understanding. The key founding spirit of this Poetically true renaissance is John Michell. As his reputation grows for expounding the magical secrets of the past, so the man becomes steadily more elusive. And this is deliberate. Michell (internally) is a very isolated, singular man who made a conscious decision many years ago to play down the egotism of personal fame for the more solid rewards of philosophical and mystical enlightenment. He has a huge circle of friends and acquaintances from many countries and diverse cultures, all of whom receive polite attention and concerned hospitality any time of the day or night. The singularity is carefully guarded behind a genuine warmth. Like many of us in the realm of geomancy, Michell wears the Blakean armour of Poetry and Imagination. This must always be worn next to the spirit for protection against psychic vampirism to say the least! John Michell wears his armour with an insouciant air of almost debonaire charm. He needs it, both to strengthen him in the developing of his researches and to deflect from him the mental shafts of casual selfishness and leech-like need so many people project. He rejects "guru-hood" with a diffident disdain.

Michell currently lives in a big, rambling house in London's Notting Hill Gate area. It's an area protean with exotic ethnic minorities, artists, writers, criminals, ex (and not so ex) hippies, etc. A bubbling cauldron of Ceridwen indeed. Michell dwells at the top of this tall house, surrounded by books and an aura of quiet, potent magnetism. His appearance perfectly reflects his character. He is tall, casually dressed (yet neat) with the angularly aristocratic features and shrewd eyes of a man who can be gently shy one moment and firmly authoritative the next. He smokes incessantly (roll-ups) and the subsequent clouds of vapour that haze him like a nimbus add to his sometimes surreal behavioural images. His body is slight but his learning is massive and eclectic. He will discuss the canonical mathematics of Theon of Smyrna one moment, switch to the metrology of Stonehenge the next and then discourse upon the evils of our current political system and its coming replacement. All connected things of course to those who view the world through geomantic eyes. Michell coined the term "radical-traditionalist" when he began to issue his series of revolutionary polemical pamphlets under that heading in 1972. It has provided a banner which this (Roberts) ferociously particular writer is content to travel under, and is a convenient appellation for many radical people who are not puppets of ~~the~~ neo-Nazis. In fact Michell's pamphlets and articles have run parallel with his major book production, the one counterpointing the other through illuminating (and cross-checking) leit motifs. Revolutionary fervour and metaphysical insight often go hand in hand and so they should!

Since 1967 Michell has been developing as a radical mystic, questioning the validity of the paths down which modern society has seen fit to stumble and looking back to the lost eras of psychological tranquility and social harmony. He traces the patterns and forms of the Golden Age; that time of peace to which many mythologies refer, when the human race communed with the Gods and recognized the basic structural designs that form the magical morphology of Creation. John Michell's introspection and mystical conclusions have born fruit in the form of 14 books (the latest, on great eccentrics, just having been delivered to the publisher) and numerous articles and pamphlets all appearing since 1967. The work ranges over the full spectrum of occult, earth mysteries, paranormal subjects. Fortean phenomena. UFOs, geomancy, magic, etc., all are encompassed and elucidated with fluid insight and controlled, masterly style. This man can really write. But behind it all there is a synthesis, a rationale, a direction and it is time that the triadic motivation is properly assessed.

Michell maintains that orthodox archaeology and its philosophical corollary reductive social dynamics resulting in Darwinian evolutionary theory is wrong. According to Michell's radical-traditionalist philosophy (totally endorsed by this writer), the story of Homo Sapiens is that of gradual deterioration from a once profound ecological and intellectual balance. This holistic balance enabled rapport with the Gods (elemental forces that govern the harmony of existence) but when this psychic blending

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faded the long eras of futility and brutality were unceremoniously ushered in. The demi-urgic forces (termed Archons by the Gnostics, devas by their descendants and occultists) withdrew their countenance from fallen humanity and the Golden Age ended in chaos. Such are the cyclic rhythms of history. Michell's vision of prehistory -- that shadowy time of megaliths, magic and geometrical metaphysics -- is consistent and coherent with the above reading of what might be termed theological chronology. The scholarly documentation of factual evidence to prove his point makes up the formal content of Michell's work.

But beyond the lucidity of this mystic's words and facts lies the poetic and intuitive grasp of structures, correspondences and patterns that blend into the wondrous web of a cosmology based upon divine revelation. This cosmology was the secret that motivated all the great civilizations of antiquity, including Sumeria, Egypt and Greece, although when it was filtered through their cultural lenses its form and content was severely diminished. The roots of this cosmology lie in the mists of a lost landscape -- the landscape of an antediluvian world shaped and patterned physically to conform to the canonical ratios of a metaphysical-geometric design. This design is interpreted through the triadic facets of magic, numerology and pure geometry. The design manifests itself numerically in the rhythms and energy forms of nature, expressed through the geometry of proportional growth ratios. These ratios run in corresponding canonical harmony through the microcosm to the macrocosm and vice versa. The systematic idea is summed up in the deceptively simple phrase "as above, so below" -- the keystone in the arch of ancient magic.

IN "CITY OF REVELATION" (1972) his second most famous book, Michell states that in the depths of prehistory mankind discovered a worldwide civilisation based upon divinely revealed knowledge of the sacred canon. This knowledge then provided an insight into the structure (and purpose) of the universe. The canon is a crystallization into Being of the structural motivation of God's will. The essence of Creation. On earth this manifests itself in the beauty of nature's endlessly interlocking diversity. Aware human beings have always recognised the canon intuitively (it being endemic in their spiritual consciousness) and have laboured to express its sublimities through art, philosophy and metaphysics. Once, aeons ago, areas of landscape on this planet were moulded in conformity to the celestial harmonies, this being achieved through the art of magical divination today termed geomancy. Natural mandalic patterns inducing physical sanctity were recognised in the topographical schemata and were adapted by the old geomancers into areas of pronounced spiritual potency. The purpose of these patterns was the channelling of telluric and cosmic energies into an overall life-enhancement system. It was also for the working of magic and the paying of homage to the wonders of the canon and its demi-urgic "labourers" the Gods again under God. The canon also regulated the energies of the terrestrial biosphere and gave mankind a true social cohesion. In "CITY OF REVELATION" Michell sums it up in these words:

"The canon was the complete cosmology, the model of all reality and thus an image of the human mind. No one ever supposed it could have been a human invention; indeed, every source of tradition and sacred history declares it to have first been introduced through revelation. The origin of human intelligence is still totally mysterious, but it becomes evident from a study of the canon, whose earliest form is always the most perfect, that there is no question here of evolution or gradual development."

The great temples, pyramids and churches built among the ruins of the old "natural" civilization were all structured to the perphically "remembered" canonical standards of magic and geometry interpreted through numerology. But the original purity of conception was gradually lost. That, briefly is the psychic rationale endorsed by Michell.

Whatever diverse subjects this man encompassed since "CITY OF REVELATION" (incidentally he is rewriting it at the moment, just as he has his magnum opus "THE NEW VIEW OVER ATLANTIS"), the basic exploration of the canonical pattern has remained supreme. He is really a "physical philosopher" working in the mode this writer has come to term applied "geomythics". He still researches endlessly in libraries and roams the countryside soaking up inspiration. Now in his early fifties, John Michell has all the energy and more enthusiasm than many teenagers. He is a stimulating yet elliptical man who never ceases

to learn and disseminate that learning. Paradoxically, he has many eccentric character traits that are only natural in a mystic whose life has included phases conventional to the English upper classes. He was educated at Eton, moved into the confines of Cambridge University, out into the Royal Navy, then into a briefly erratic career as an estate agent. After inheriting money at the death of his father, Michell cut his connections with the world of aggressive materialism and seriously began to refine his considerable intellect. All this has led to a fine mind delicately balanced, that can spark like a quartz crystal! John Michell transmutes intuition through intellect, producing a refiner's fire of poetic logic, leavened by the ratioinative process but never dominated by it. In other words he "transmits" true wisdom in a carefully distilled form. He is a "magician" in the best sense of that sorely abused word.

It is to be hoped that the "last true antiquary" will see his work projected into a golden future before becoming a part of the golden past he so reveres. He deserves tribute and love for upholding the torch of the human spirit so fiercely in an age that seems determined to extinguish it in a holocaust of atheism and apathy. The New Age must be and is being fought for. John Michell is in the forefront of that battle, an unlikely but doughty fighter in a vast cosmic war. He does not stand alone. Pythagoras, Plato, Iamblichus, Dee, Bruno, Blake, Stukeley, Stirling and the whole battalion of current mystical geomancers are ranged with him. Victory will see the resurgence of the cosmic canon in the consciousness of men, once more exalt them so they can look fearlessly upon the benign face of God.

-- Anthony Roberts
October 1983

1850 BC

BY JOHN
MICHELL

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THE "READER", as his new friends call him, once a notable figure in certain branches of the Somerset County Library, now appears only as an occasional entry in the notebooks of West Country UFO spotters.

It is simply impossible adequately to describe the methods by which the "Reader" ** attained his present eternally delightful state. They are not complicated, merely inexpressible. Despite the efforts over thousands of years by philosophers, magicians and madmen to evolve a language through which consciousness of the further dimension might be brought within the reach of reason, by 1968, the year of the "Reader's" translation, the material triumphs of the preceding decades has distracted most people's attention from the true purpose of all art and science, defined by the "Reader" himself as, "for me to have a better time than I have ever had before -- all the time." The shocking failure of scholars and scientists everywhere to find a universal medium to express the medium of their various discoveries made the "Reader's" work unnecessarily prolonged. In the course of his search he had to master a hundred barbaric jargons, to extract his one from the puerile dross of learned publications, to separate facts from pious moralizing, to suffer partial blindness, and spiritual debility, merely to acquire the elementary information necessary for his journey.

After leaving school, before enjoying for the first time the hospitality of his only patron, the director of the Oak Lawn Lunatic Asylum, , the "Reader" was seized with a bitter resentment towards his former torturers, the executives in the business of compulsory education, through whose efforts he now realised, both his mind and his body had become permanently distorted. Years of helpless exposure to the pervading drone of obscene, contradictory rubbish, both in and out of the classroom, had left him with certain alien convictions and perverse desires far too monstrous to be purged by the sabotaged forces of his own will.

Suspecting that others might be similarly afflicted, the "Reader" determined to spy on his friends by making himself invisible. His first attempt was apparently a ludicrous failure, naive and unambitious to the point of insanity. It did, however, lead to his introduction into the comforts and amenities of Oak Lawn, where much of his subsequent work was conducted.

Financed by the proceeds of typewriters, stolen one by one from the offices of the firm in which his father had placed him, the "Reader" spent the summer of his ~~twentieth year~~ wandering the country, staying the night at bed and breakfast houses. One evening, staring in tearful loneliness at the wallpaper of his temporary room, he conceived the idea of entering the world of gay roses and curious marks which surrounded him on all four sides. He copied the design on a piece of paper, went up to London and ordered a suit made in a textile of the same specially printed pattern. Some weeks later he returned to the wallpapered room in the lodging house, put on the suit, drew the curtains and dimmed the lights. He then called for the landlady and, standing against the wall, anticipated with pleasure the prospect of watching her bewilderment, while himself remaining invisible.

For some moments, indeed, she did not notice him, flattened against the wall, concealed in the shadows of a towering wardrobe, but her eventual outrage, the "Reader's" mortification and his inability, dressed in his ridiculous clothes, to treat with the various authorities who now suddenly infested him produced a scene of painful confusion, only finally dispelled within the asylum gates.

In the course of observing his new companions at Oak Lawns, the "Reader" came to realise that many of them had already achieved what he had attempted, but in precisely the opposite way. For whereas he had sought physical invisibility, they had been content to leave their bodies on public display, extracting their consciousness to wander where it would. Yet curiously enough, not one of them had taken advantage of his liberty, for each continued to haunt his own body, watching anxiously over its movements and resenting the shocks, and restrictions to which it was subjected.

The "Reader" also noticed that there were a great many more people in the asylum than he had at first suspected. All kinds of idle and spiteful creatures, either with no bodies of their own or too lazy to inhabit them, ceaselessly tormented all who tolerated their approach. He was surprised to see that most of his companions actually welcomed the attentions of this tiresome company, each side provoking the other with irritating conversation and sly tricks. The "Reader" himself, still obsessed with thoughts of invisibility, avoided as far as possible the society of his fellow guests and their familiars, but determined to watch their behaviour from the point of view of a detached spectator. He found, however, that the further he withdrew, the more eager they became to provoke his interest. Both the human and the disembodied element began to adopt a respectful, fawning attitude towards him, and several of the latter came to appear far more attractive and intelligent than he had previously supposed. He even found it possible to control to some extent their movements, to disperse malicious groups and to direct them from place to place with gestures of the hand, or with the eye alone.

On leaving Oak Lawn, his sanity certified, his crimes forgiven, the "Reader" began again to roam the countryside. He was now penniless, sleeping in barns and eating where he could. Most of the day he read, pages of newspaper from the hedges or the books in local libraries and tramp infested reading rooms. Everywhere he found isolated references to the ethereal that still surrounded him; some had followed him from Oak Lawn, others appeared along the way. They now seemed a fairly amiable crowd, but the "Reader", remembering their spiteful behaviour towards the inhabitants of Oak Lawn, still avoided any closer association that might disturb his studies. They were, however, generally well disposed towards him, and on several occasions, by taking advantage of some piece of information they urged upon him, he was able to avoid unforeseen trouble, to find food, and favourable resting places.

One afternoon, staring through the glass case of a local museum at the rude stone carving of a female figure, which he understood from the whispered conversation around his head to be some 15,000 years old, the "Reader's" eye was drawn to its label, describing the piece as a fertility goddess of the year 2,000 B.C. More extraordinarily, an almost identical figure nearby, though evidently carved no later than within the last hundred years, in about 1875 by a local archaeologist, was similarly labelled. The "Reader" er"

further examined the other inscriptions in the museum. Many were entirely wrong and the meanings and dates they attributed to the various exhibits were often quite stupid and misleading. A ten thousand year old Tibetan magnetic distributor, for example, was described as a religious ornament, and a painted Australian device for attracting rain, was called a totemic stone. Apparently the museum was the victim or the perpetrator of some whimsical joke.

The curator, to whom the "Reader" applied for the purpose of pointing out these errors, immediately became venomously angry. The "Reader" protested, grew frightened and confused, was suddenly overwhelmed as a host of shrill buzzing creatures swarmed in upon him. He stepped forward waving his hands. Something fell to the floor. The gates of Oak Lawn rose into his mind, opened, and some hours later closed behind him for the second time.

For some years, with occasional holidays at Oak Lawn, the "Reader" lived in a deserted cottage in the Somerset marshes, accepted by the local people, who made use of his developing talents as a healer of diseases in men and cattle, as a consultant in cases of sterility and as a weather prophet. In return he received offerings of food and money, which allowed him to spend his days in the public library of a nearby town, or among the ancient ramparts and earthworks of the surrounding hills.

The scene in the museum and the weeks of demonic persecution that followed had finally convinced him of the need for invisibility and he began to pay closer attention to the unseen creatures, of whose presence he was now ceaselessly aware. The argument with the curator, he realised, had momentarily relaxed his vigilance. The attendant army had rushed his defences, seized and tormented him without mercy. Only with frightful effort had they at last been expelled. He now saw the necessity of learning more about their ways in order to protect himself from their latent malice and to direct them as far as possible to his own advantage. His literary researches, confirmed by certain experiences at prehistoric sites, suggested that many of those that surrounded him were the creatures of another age, time travellers from antiquity, and the "Reader" noticed that they each had a certain affinity with objects and places associated with their own particular time. The creatures that haunted the Somerset hills and mounds, for instance, were older and provided for better company than those that infested Oak Lawn, and to his acquaintance with them in particular he owed his respectable reputation among his neighbours. To find a particularly delightful spot and there to join the society of its disembodied inhabitants seemed to the "Reader" the most favourable route towards invisibility.

In the course of his studies, the "Reader" came across several references to individuals, whole races even, who had outgrown the desire to retain their bodies and had entered a more congenial plane without the intercession of physical death. Most of the mythological heroes had adopted that course; so also had many earlier people, the ancestors of Atlantis, the primeval inhabitants of the lost Pacific continent, the Danaan race of Ireland, the Toltecs, and the pre-Incans of South America, and many others. Anyone, indeed, with justifiable claims to the true civilised state had always preferred to live outside death and the pig trough rather than to remain a fretful companion of decaying flesh. The best of every generation had chosen the first opportune moment to depart, leaving only the stupid and inadequate to perpetuate the decline of human culture. All the "Reader" had to do was to find the exit by which his predecessors had escaped.

One day the "Reader" was in the library looking through an old Somerset guide-book, illustrated by photographs taken some fifty years earlier. They showed scenes and landscapes, all quite familiar, yet somehow alien. Suddenly he understood the solution. Photography is such a recent development that no one has yet become conscious of the remarkable difference in colour, light, tone and atmosphere between a Victorian landscape, and a similar view photographed today. Every age, the "Reader" perceived, has its characteristic visual aspect in the same way as it has its own peculiar note, detectable in the prevailing harmony of its contemporary music. It was merely a question of selecting a desirable period, analysing its qualities from the evidence of surviving objects, poetry and traditions, recreating for a moment the conditions of that time and stepping inside.

From that moment the "Reader" concentrated his studies upon the subjects of astronomy, magnetism and astrological history. He selected as his future home, the year, 1850 B.C. not perhaps the peak of the Golden Age, but still illuminated by its afterglow and fairly accessible through its sites and artefacts to one accustomed to intuitive research. Mythology, he realised, takes place not only in the past, but also in the future in accordance with certain almost recurring cycles. The psychic conditions that prevailed at the time of the "Reader's" experiment were sufficiently close to those of 1850 B.C. to justify his selection of that year as the object of his attempt.

The beautiful green mound with its prospect over a fine landscape of woods and rivers, towards distant mountains, which the "Reader" had chosen as the scene of his eternal habitation had formerly been the site of an equinoctial fair, suppressed by a puritan vicar and now long abandoned, to the detriment of all natural growth in the vicinity. On the traditional day the "Reader" dressed in a white robe and heavily encumbered with a varied assortment of objects, mounted its slope, for at a particular hour just before sunset, he calculated the astronomical influences should be most favourable to his enterprise. Usually the small plateau on top of the mound was deserted, but, as he gained the summit, the "Reader" noticed a gaily dressed party, many also in robes, smoking and eating beneath a tree on the far side. He paid no attention but sat down at once, placing around him the various instruments, his mirror, tinted spectacles, harp, amulets and bag of poppy seeds, together with the spear and arrowheads stolen without difficulty from a local museum.

He sat entranced, absorbed in the subtle movements of the eather, that first surrounded and then pervaded his body. The setting sun stood for an instant poised on a far mountain peak, like a balloon on a pin. The "Reader" struck his harp and cried out.

His white robe shimmered green.

The sun disappeared, the "Reader" also.

The group beneath the tree suddenly shivered. One of them said, "Who was that guy? I've seen him up here before."

"MEGALITHOMANIA" by JOHN MICHELL

(Thames and Hudson, £8-50)

Madness comes in all shapes and forms. When it came to me its was in the shape of stone circles, standing stones and other prehistoric structures. It came to John Michell in the same way. Through the ages a strain of this malady has struck individuals of all types and deserves to reach epidemic proportions. Michell has identified the virulent strain plaguing certain persons in Britain as megalithomania. Long may spread this feverish enthusiasm for ancient monuments and if this book is anything to go by many more will be infected.

To stretch the metaphor, just as Prof. Alexander Thom has infected his whole family with astroarcheological megalithomaniacal geometry, I hope the disease will equally hereditary among my family.

Those who have visited megalithic sites must surely have been captivated by the subtle magic they engender. Their placing creates wonderment and the imagination can be given full rein. Nevertheless it is with practise that caution be observed, for experience teaches that not all that is given prominence by archaeologists is justified and by that token much that appears significant is dismissed or ignored. The dubious categorization and frankly slap-happy academic approach is downright erroneous and ignorant. A central issue about prehistory is the ever-changing feats of scholarly imagination. The monuments remain but the theories come and go. (cont. page 9)

"THE CONCORDANCE OF HIGH MONARCHISTS OF IRELAND"

For many the thought is that the trouble with the Troubles is that the Irish spend too much time looking to the past. Yet according to the plan for a peaceful future of a unified Ireland set out here, that is exactly where the Irish should look. Back beyond historical turmoils and tribulations to prehistoric times. As Michell points out, a working project was proved and could be modified today as a model to unite the four provinces. (cont. p.9)

(Price unknown; published by author; from 11 Powis Gardens, London W11.)

Whether the bewildering complexities of Loyalist and Republican dogma can ever be erased or cojoined has to be seen. Certainly a political solution appears unlikely as an extension of initiatives being considered presently. Michell's notion of a "concordance" -- by common consent -- with a High King presiding over a federal parliament seems reasonable. Michell is convinced only nomadic people can exist without a hierarchical system and he looks deeply into the arrangement of how local government and other bodies would be controlled. The High King's powers being defined and his role basically as ceremonial.

Michell -- a Cornishman with presumably no axe to grind -- sees geomancy as paramount and the High King as fertility figure at the head of the federation encouraging national pride. It is he who would preside over a central "Vatican-style" administrative city state and "The Boyne Valley Vision" author Martin Brennan has designed a "visionary" central island in Ireland's form.

Michell has obviously given much thought to details and most importantly the practicalities of the system if adopted. There is stubbornness in the Irish character and in parts deep mistrust, but there is also warmth and a strong sense of identity with landscape. Of all alternatives on offer this seems the soundest and most harmonious.

Subtitled "The Pattern for the Future", the book is charmingly designed, pocket-size, and a positive blueprint for brotherhood.

***** (MEGALITHOMANIA...Continued)

The Eighties see an entrenchment of views following the upheavals of the Sixties. Michell begins his historic study with the revivalism of Dr Stukeley. Personally I think the time is ripe for another fundamental reassessment. Having visited most of the pre-historic sites in the North during the past four years I am amazed at the impressions I have come away with when considered against those of professional archaeologists. I know two people can go to a football game and have a totally different impression of what went on, but the sites as recorded by academics and what one sees on the ground in a larger context of bear scant comparison. And remember we as taxpayers fund these people.

Grumbles aside, Michell notes that when in 1969 I revived "The Ley Hunter", this "long-lapsed journal acted as a host to the wide range of new theories and observations of antiquity which symptomized the revived megalithomania of the late 1960s onwards." He rightly adds that this new focus drew together "the more the merrier perhaps", diverse personalities involved in dowsing, geometers and mathematicians, spiritual revivalists, occultists and even ufologists. The broad spectrum has led to an extremely mature generation of researchers with a special interest in recording by scientific instruments and also dowsing the energies apparent at the Rollright stone circle, in Oxfordshire, and elsewhere.

With regard to the factor of time, megalithomania seems to be part of a spiral in human consciousness, with generations periodically being drawn to the ancient monuments and applying contemporary worldviews upon the edifices. Michell begins with William Stukeley's Druidic revivalism and plots a course through the weird and wonderful phantasmagorical spectacle of 1,001 theories of the who, when, why and was there a megalithic culture which has ranged from Atlantean holocaust survivors to benign ancient astronauts, via almost every race to have walked the earth and some the ethereal realms.

It is a fascinating and absorbing subject and Michell provides a salutary commentary on a mixture of human folly, credulity, ingenuity and sagacity. In fact the megalithomaniacal process is still evolving as we're still erecting megaliths, from the Cenotaph to Centre Point, from science fiction to Keith Roberts' ley generating "Big Fans" to science fact's microwave tower erections, providing signatures to utopian eternity or flash-bang-wallop Armageddon. Just as Stonekiller Robinson took on Avebury, the I.R.A. bombed London's Post Office Tower. Nothing changes.

Mankind's attraction to the old stones is eternal but cyclical. They are not simply the provenance of archaeologists and as long ago as the time of Stukeley and William Blake, the study's secular stranglehold was loosened, to open the doorway for artists and mystics, astrologers and astronomers, physicists and psychics. This book chronicles that timeless fascination.

Michell is one of those rare writers with the "Renaissance Man" sensibility which inspires a wide range of interests which though seemingly superficially disconnected in fact have an underlying connection. It is not only a curious fact that all the major earth mysteries writers were drawn to the subject by the flying saucer phenomenon -- arguably a kind of 20th century suburban shamanism at its purest level of experience -- (within bounds -- i.e. not hypnotic/hypnopompic/motorway hypnotism etc. which is something else) -- but that they also generally shared a great interest in aspects of transport. In Michell's case canals.

But "The New View Over Atlantis" is about subjects ancient and perennial. The first part is more or less the same as in earlier editions and focusses on leys, though with some additions. The second part has been almost entirely rewritten in the wake of the author's subsequent writings and researches on the subject of the mystical code of number.

Unfortunately there has been some hostile comment recently about ley hunting and its supposed unscientific methodology. Such a book as this is a veritable antidote. For the philosophy espoused here is closer to the requirements of a future society than the scientific direction which has led us into what is an inevitable impasse of technological sophistication available for the few able to afford entry into its sanctum. The inspiration of "The New View Over Atlantis" suggests that we do not need the sophistication of computer software to appreciate the magic of numbers and certainly the sterility of the laboratory should be anathema to a spirit wishing to walk the old straight tracks. Unemployment and diminishing career prospects are worrisome, but leisure -- enforced or otherwise -- can be usefully applied to earth mysteries pursuits. Glad it may appear, but to read and follow the direction proposed in this book could well be anyone and everyone's road to sanity and consequently help society achieve better balance.

Certainly anyone who knows John Michell will verify that he is a man who is at peace with himself and an awesomely balanced individual. That shines through this book and speaks for itself. The potential of Atlantis is there. Atlantis is not a physical place. It never was, of course. It is a stunning metaphor. In no small measure do books like this assist the resurgence of the Atlantean spirit.

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LIVING WONDERS by JOHN MICHELL and ROBERT J.M. RICKARD

(Thames & Hudson, paperback £7)

Subtitled "Mysteries and Curiosities of the Animal World", this book is presented as "Son of 'Phenomena'" or "A Field Guide to Exotic Wildlife and Paranormal Natural History". Somewhere between Charles Fort's inclusionist worldview and Rupert Sheldrake's "formative causation" hypothesis of morphic resonance, the bold explorers of the jungle of Fortean bring back travellers' tales of lost and refound species, fauna from the deep and the skies and the unknown, raining and talking cats and dogs, winged cats, loyal canines, globsters and entombed toads, creatures back from the Outback, and enough pumas to eat every resident in Surrey. Yes, Virginia, John and Bob promise you can have mermaid's tits on toast if you eat up all that nice pterodactyl soup from Tesco's.

Cossetted in our safe urban homes -- bring in the dog and put out the cat -- we can embark upon our armchair expeditions through these pages in search of apemen, neodinosauers, krakens, and imagine avian battles and abductions as Joey assures us he's a pretty boy.

The style is studious but light, factually concise but witty, altogether erudite and entertaining.

It is divided into three parts. Firstly there is an introduction to cryptozoology and the usual ding-dongs between the fusty academics and the eyewitness accounts and corroborative evidence that excites the more open-minded mavericks among professionals and interested amateurs. All branches of science have their mysteries and zoology is shown as yet another discipline where to appear original or credulous is to attract scorn and ostracism. Secondly Fort's "teleportation" theory is dusted off and suggested as a model for explaining animal distribution. How are new ponds alive with everything from aquatic crustaceans to 20lb. pike in the blink of an eye? Thirdly they review a huge catalogue of wonderful attributes shown by members of the animal kingdom,

Many topics are continuations of material previously examined in their book "Phenomena", such as rains of frogs, toads and fish. The multiplicity of explanations and dissatisfaction that no clear-cut answer is certain renders such events unexplained to this day. Here again the notion of "teleportation" can be usefully applied; though misidentification (i.e. the frogs came out after rain) and the whirlwind theory may still hold water.....

Such tales as these I willingly believe to have veracity in a high percentage of reported cases, but my extensive researches into rumour cast grave doubts on many other categories the authors include with presumed authenticity. My own work on urban (and rural) belief tales sheds suspicion on a number of dubious wildlife claims, but I readily admit that for probably every motif of rumour and actual case will prove itself. Fact imitates fiction; or the borderline between any cultural symbol system and phenomenology must be arbitrary to the point of demanding challenge and breaching.

The illustrations, totalling 170, I found well selected and presented. The general layout is commendable and it is well referenced for further research.

"Living Wonders" is a compendium and works admirably as such. With two such dedicated influential and intelligent writers, my only regret is that a little more theorising could not have been included. A winding-up chapter could have been a boon as the book ends abruptly with no attempt to draw the strands together satisfyingly.

"PAULINGHURST BARROW" by GRANT ALLEN (Published by John Michell, 11 Powis Gardens,
(London W11, Price unknown)

It is subtitled "The effects of a medicinal dose of Cannabis Indica on a Victorian country-house guest, and how it led him into the clutches of the mound dwelling elf kings." Here, the Green Party has a lot to say about "Elf" and "Indica." In 1988, this

Unearthed from the Xmas number of the "Illustrated London News", 1892, this story delightfully links drug-taking and earth mysteries fantasising. Since the psychedelic Sixties, a more than tenuous link has existed between the high of dope smoking and the real or imagined expanded states of perception and psychological reactions caused at megalithic sites.

The story itself is told with masterful flair; full of evocative prose and wry humour, plus great sense of detail and characterisation. Naturally it reads today as a period piece and the illustrations have an archaic look. But I have since childhood treasured this style from having my grandfather's books, and the illustrator is as adept at showing the simplicity of a frail 12-year-old girl or the howling savages the Darwinian Grant Allen imagined supposed mound dwellers would resemble.

In his superb afterword, John Michell gently chides Allen for his evolutionist belief, though putting it into the perspective of the man's time, and gives a lucid and condensed cameo portrait of the author of this extraordinary work.

Michell calls it "a delightful example of that rare class of literature, about the influence of Cannabis Indica on megalithic fantasies." Not that rare I fear, for we also have the college port influenced megalithic fantasies which I fear are not by any means rare.

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"THE LEY HUNTER'S MANUAL" by ALFRED WATKINS (Turnstone Press, £3-25)

It is a monument to his vision and lucid expression of it that this book remains a true picture of ley hunting instruction. Subtitled "A Guide to Early Tracks", this slim but concise manual on what leys are, what they are the mark points and how to discover the ancient "old straight track", conveys in precise form the basics for a hobby or study second to none. The central thesis as expounded by Alfred Watkins, a Herefordshire businessman, magistrate, inventor and photographer, was that prehistoric man laid out

a precisely-surveyed system of dead straight tracks which had monuments laid upon them from standing stones and stone circles, camps and beacon points, to holy wells and pre-Reformation churches and cathedrals. The scheme is simple and easily demonstrated by laying a ruler on any map. Its simplicity, truth and more esoteric ramifications have made ley hunting a popular pastime, but the enthusiasm of its supporters has met resistance from scientific orthodoxy (particularly archaeologists), unable to cope with a challenge to neo-Darwinism and the occult dimension to the subject.

Their resistance is capably dismissed in a pithy overview of ley reality and its consequent development by that doyen of modern earth mysteries commentators John Michell. An unstinting champion of the cause of ley hunting, it was Michell who combined with John Michael to reissue this 1927 book in a Pentacle Books edition in the Seventies. Now it is back again -- as perennial as the subject -- to cast its spell on the receptive.

The book is remarkable for the evocative photographs taken by Watkins himself of his beloved Herefordshire and his reasoned argument for ley reality. His preface is a clear exposition that he knew he was right and he was. So get out the wellies and get tramping the archaic heritage of aligned tracks. There really is magic in the old ways.

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THOUGHTS ON THE DISCOVERY OF NUMBER

By JOHN MICHELL

(These notes were written for John Michell's forthcoming book)*

Birds' egg collectors know that all birds can count but some can count higher than others. For while some will notice the loss of one egg out of four, others will be undisturbed by the loss of one in two. All, however, can detect the theft of a solitary egg.

In the same way there are parts of the world where men are unable to count above the first few numbers.

We often make the mistake of thinking that all the numbers we know now were always known. Some people also believe that we have discovered all the numbers there are. Both these notions are untrue. The discovery of the number one took place the moment that the first man became aware of himself. The reproductive process led him to the discovery of 2 and 3. In the course of time the existence of other numbers became apparent, each one introducing new concepts, even, it seemed, new dimensions. Finally 9 was achieved. This discovery of 9 gave men a deeper insight into the harmony of the Universe. Previously things had seemed to proceed from a progression on one plane from 1, 2 and 3. Now the same structure could be seen in depth as three columns each of three numbers. Not for the first nor the last time it was thought that the limit had been reached, that the first nine numbers contained the means of exploring the limits of the ultimate dimension.

Up to this time progress had been towards ever greater numbers, each new discovery being larger by one than the preceding it. There then occurred a momentous event, the discovery of the number 0.

The acquisition of a figure to represent nothing opened the way to a whole new field of logic and speculation. It also led to the discovery of number 10. This figure perfected the tree of life and led to a great flowering of intellect and magic. It was now possible to express and consciously develop inherent knowledge of the correspondences, of the inter-relationship of the microcosm and macrocosm of the expression of the celestial orbits or the human body in terms of colour, tone and proportion. Men became aware of the privileges they had received with the gift of reason, which raised the human species to a unique position among life on earth.

These revelations led rapidly to the discovery of numbers greater than 10. There were some who, by tentative experiments in the science of multiplication, reached certain conclusions about the possible existence of the number 20 and even of 30, 40, 50, 60, 70, 80 and 90, and this was before the discovery of all numbers in the teens had been

* From "Ealing 1st Year Graphics", Ealing School of Art, Summer 1968. Just as he has revised "The View Over Atlantis", John is currently doing the same for "City of Revelation"

established. There was much controversy about the existence of 20, etc. Indeed at one time there were people who maintained that 20 could never satisfactorily be demonstrated and that the teens were more numerous than people thought, lasting perhaps almost into infinity.

Gradually, however, the numbers as we know them emerged, each discovery marked by the performance of magic rite in which the new number was allotted its place in a cosmological system. Its character was revealed, the influences under which it fell and stories developed to illustrate various aspects of the number, many fragments of which survive today. Particularly memorable were the celebrations in honour of number 12 and the events which followed. Certain people felt that 12, being divisible by 2, 3, 4 and 6 (four integers, an unheard of number at that time) should take precedence over 10 and usurp its terminal position. These people formed clubs of 12 members to advocate use of the duodecogram and of the number 12 generally. They had some influence in dividing the calendar and in apportioning units of measurement. They also had considerable success in developing a practical mathematic system of great beauty. Among their achievements was that of expressing the ratios, mathematical, geometrical and harmonic, in available whole numbers by the progression 1, 8, 9 and 12. But the curious dual nature of number 12 made it in some ways less satisfactory than number 10, and by the time its advocates had fully developed their case, the discovery of 100 had firmly established 10 as the unit of multiplication and rendered any change impracticable.

We have discovered millions and billions more, yet we are no nearer towards achieving all the numbers that lie between those now familiar and infinity. There are still many scales and ranges of which we have no notion, and these unknown groups may lie in any direction, large, smaller or sideways. It may be possible to write them only in another size or shape or in another ink. Perhaps we will have to use another means of communication to express them to each other.

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